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Letter dated 22 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement issued on 22 March 2000 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Duri **Mohammed**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Statement issued on 22 March 2000 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia

Almost two years have passed since Eritrea committed an unforgivable crime against Ethiopia. The consequences of the Eritrean aggression have been enormous, both in terms of loss of human lives and in terms of the hope that the peoples of the two countries and those of our subregion in general had started to have about their future.

It has also taken Ethiopia almost two years to try to minimize the damage caused by that crime and that folly committed by the Eritrean leadership — a leadership which has neither accountability nor wisdom. The hands of the Eritrean leadership are indeed drenched with blood. They assume full responsibility, not only for the crime of aggression but also for having been an obstacle to peace since day one. The past two years are littered with lost opportunities for peace — which were wrecked by Eritrea — and for minimizing the damage caused by the madness in Asmara. No amount of chicanery can conceal the fact that not only has the leadership in Eritrea been the cause of the conflict but it has also been the obstacle to the peaceful resolution of the crisis.

In this context, the latest pronouncements from Asmara about the upcoming talks at Algiers appear not altogether strange. They reflect the same mentality which not only Ethiopia but also the facilitators have been used to. That the statement was made in the name of the Council of Ministers — thereby suggesting the existence of debate, consultation and accountability — is rather amusing, but that is beside the point. In any case, it is Eritrea's business if it chooses to have no constitution, no parliament, no mechanism for democratic decision-making and no accountability. What is important, however, is how the Eritrean leadership continues to be incorrigible and beyond redemption.

The Eritrean leadership is once again spoiling to kill whatever opportunities there are for peace. Can one forget, among other things, how one such great opportunity was nipped in the bud by Eritrea in November 1998 at Ouagadougou during the first proximity talks that were held at the highest level under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU)? Eritrea committed yet another crime at that time, just as it had earlier in August 1998 at the same venue (at a proximity talk at the level of foreign ministers), when it refused to give peace a chance.

Now Eritrea is engaged in posturing and in a game of brinkmanship in an attempt to convince the world that it has been let down by the facilitators. This only shows that the Eritrean leadership is incapable of having common decency, of learning from its mistakes and thus of being remorseful.

The facilitators knew full well that the amendments to the Technical Arrangements are justified, necessary and were demanded by the need to make the Technical Arrangements fully consistent with the basic OAU documents, namely the Framework Agreement and the modalities for its implementation. No generosity was shown to Ethiopia. Rationality prevailed and the facilitators felt that fairness should not be thrown out the window to appease Eritrea.

At no time in the past 22 months has Eritrea ever seized available opportunities for peace based on the full and unequivocal restoration of the status

quo ante. Eritrea knows this is the bottom line for Ethiopia, the victim of Eritrea's crime. No amount of posturing by Eritrea will make Ethiopia deviate from this fundamental principle. As we have always insisted, aggression cannot and will not be rewarded. Moreover, this should not be solely Ethiopia's cause. The defense of principles of international law should be the business of everyone, not only of those directly affected.

The way that this conflict is resolved will have enormous implications for durable peace in our subregion. Given Eritrea's track record, the minimum that can be done as a contribution for the peace of the subregion by all concerned is to convey a clear message to Eritrea that it should not expect its aggression to be rewarded, much less to be congratulated for the crime committed against Ethiopia. It is only then that Eritrea will stop posturing and understand that brinkmanship will not pay.